



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Resources and Development Committee approves
legislation establishing a negotiating team for the Peabody water use lease**

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, the Resources and Development Committee discussed Legislation No. 0308-13, which seeks to establish a negotiating team for the purpose of setting a water rate for the Peabody Western Coal Company lease.

If approved, the six-member negotiating team would consist of a member from the Resources and Development Committee, and the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee, a council delegate from the region where Peabody Coal Company operates, the Navajo Nation attorney general, director of Water Management, and the department manager for the Navajo Minerals Department.

“Today the water lease allows for Peabody to only pay \$460 per acre-feet, for close to 1,200 water acre-feet per year. Others pay nearly \$1,300 per acre feet,” said legislation sponsor Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill). “I would like for the negotiating team to make the new terms retroactive to 2007.”

Delegate Witherspoon emphasized the significant lost revenue for the Nation and requested for the RDC to consider two amendments that would further clarify the language within the legislation.

The RDC approved the amendments to the legislation with a vote of 3-0.

RDC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) questioned how the revenue would be used.

According to Nabik’iyati’ Committee Resolution NABIAP-23-12, upon approval of the lease a sufficient amount of the water revenue will be directed to primary and secondary education, in a manner to be determined by the Navajo Nation Council.

Delegate Tsosie recommended that the Council discuss the future use of the proposed revenue in the near future.

“I would like for the collected revenue to be funneled towards Head Start and elementary level programs, that is where our focus needs to be,” said RDC chair Council Delegate Katherine Benally

(Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta). “We need to put money into the basics, so our student don’t start off failing.”

The RDC approved Legislation No. 0308-13 with a vote of 3-0.

Legislation No. 0308-13 now moves forward to the Health, Education and Human Services Committee followed by the Naabik’iyati’ Committee for final consideration.

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